

Remarks Following Discussions With President Vaclav Klaus and Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek of the Czech Republic in Prague, Czech Republic

June 5, 2007

President Klaus. Ladies and gentlemen, unusually, there are three of us here, but our meetings took on a platform of the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic participating. And what we wanted to show by that was that with regard to the United States, the opinions of the President of the Republic and of the Prime Minister are identical. This was to demonstrate that.

We are happy about this is the second time we can welcome here the American President in the course of his office. He is the first American President to be here for a second time in his term. And we are also happy about he is actually starting his visit to Europe here.

We regard his visit as a confirmation of a traditional friendship between the Czech Republic and the United States, a friendship that has always been confirmed in the key moments of the previous century—in 1918, in 1945, and in 1989. We very much appreciate the U.S. friendship. There are things to follow up on, and I suppose this visit has brought new, enriching aspects to our friendship.

We've exchanged information on the situation in our respective countries and on the situation throughout the world. We are aware of the fact that the U.S. is highly responsible for the world's development at the moment, and I would like to emphasize that President Bush and the U.S. enjoys the support of the Czech Republic in that regard. We clearly demonstrate that in our participation in missions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo, et cetera.

We also talked about the stationing of the U.S. military facility in this country and in the neighboring country of Poland. And I think we've understood—we agree with President Bush on that. We regarded as important about President Bush has promised to make maximum efforts to explain these issues to Russia and President Putin. We have pointed it out to our guest that it is very important that we win maximum sup-

port for this project of the Czech public, who are very sensitive to those issues, and I suppose that this is what President Bush clearly realizes.

We've also exchanged views on the European integration process, and we've assured Mr. President that both myself and the Government of the Czech Republic—the matter is that the U.S. must not be regarded as a competitor of Europe. We really are not involved in creating a united Europe as a certain counterbalance to the U.S. This is not our goal. We really care about a strong transatlantic relationship, relationship between the Czech Republic and the U.S.

We are aware of the fact that our bilateral relationship is seamless. And we have emphasized to the President that the solution of the visa waiver issue would certainly help that to be regarded that way throughout our country.

May I thank again President Bush for his short, but very busy visit to the Czech Republic and for his very open and friendly dialog we've engaged in. Thank you, Mr. President.

President Bush. Laura and I are really pleased to be back in this magnificent city. As the President noted, I had the honor of being here once before during my Presidency. We had a great stay then, and I'm really looking forward to my time here.

It's beginning an important trip to Europe. Obviously, I'm off to the G-8 later on this evening. I think it's important for the people of the Czech Republic to know, however, that my first stop is here. And the reason why is because the people of the United States marvel at the great strength of character that the people of the Czech Republic have shown, your great desire for freedom. People in this country took risk necessary so that the people could actually live in a free society.

And, Mr. President, we're honored to call you friend. We appreciate very much our relationship—our bilateral relationship and our relationship in the transatlantic community. I thank you very much for being strong allies, Mr. Prime Minister and Mr. President, against extremists and radicals who would deny others the chance to live in a free society.

We live in a world in which there are ideologically driven people who murder the innocent in order to achieve their strategic objectives. And I thank the Czech Government, as well as the people of this important country, for their steadfast refusal to allow the extremists to intimidate, allow the extremists to undermine young democracies.

I appreciate so very much the fact that you have put troops in harm's way in Iraq and Afghanistan. I expressed my deepest sympathies to the families who have lost a loved one. I would hope that those families understand, the cause is noble and just and necessary for peace for the long term.

I appreciate very much the fact that the Czech Republic supported our Fund for Democracy. One of the first countries to step up was the Czech Republic, under the leadership of the President. When given a chance to help others realize the blessings of a free society, this important country stood up and said, "We want to work together with others to bring the blessings of liberty to those who have not had it."

I want to thank very much the Government for stepping up and supporting those who have—don't have an opportunity to speak for themselves, whether it be the dissidents in Belarus or in Cuba. I find it inspiring to be in a country where the leadership and the people are willing to say, "We listen carefully for the voices of those who have been imprisoned. We care deeply about human rights and human dignity not only in our own country but worldwide." I am in such a country. And so, Mr. President and Mr. Prime Minister, I'm proud to stand with you here.

We talked a lot about our mutual concerns. There's no greater issue for the people of the Czech Republic than visa waiver. I understand the issue well. I understand why people of this country would say, "Here we are, sacrificing along with the United States in Afghanistan and Iraq, yet our people don't have the same visa rights as other countries that might not be so supportive in the effort against the extremists." I see that contradiction, and therefore, I'm a strong supporter in changing our visa waiver policy. I will work with Congress to come up with a policy that, of course, meets our needs, security needs,

for example, but also treats the people of the Czech Republic with respect and who listens to those cries.

I know this is a frustrating issue for your leadership. People in the Czech Republic say, "Get it done now. We're tired of waiting." I know that, Mr. President. I just want to assure you I'll work as hard as I possibly can. We're involved in a very important immigration debate here—in the United States now—and the visa waiver is a part of this important dialog. And the only thing I can do is to assure the people I'll work with Congress to get something done in a constructive fashion.

And then, of course, we discussed the missile defense issue. Let me first talk about a general principle when it comes to relations with Russia. The cold war is over; it ended. The people of the Czech Republic don't have to choose between being a friend to the United States or a friend with Russia. You can be both. We don't believe in a zero-sum world. We don't believe that one should force a country to choose. We believe, as a matter of fact, when we work together, we can achieve important objectives.

One objective is to safeguard free nations from the possibility of a missile attack launched from a rogue regime. That's a true threat to peace. As I've told President Putin, Russia is not our enemy. The enemy of a free society such as ours would be a radical or extremists or a rogue regime trying to blackmail the free world in order to promote its ideological objectives. And so my attitude on missile defense is, is that this is a purely—it's not my attitude; it's the truth—it's a purely defensive measure, aimed not at Russia but at true threats.

And therefore, as the President mentioned, I look forward to having conversations with President Putin, not only at the G-8 but in the United States when he comes over. And my message will be, Vladimir—I call him Vladimir—that you shouldn't fear a missile defense system. As a matter of fact, why don't you cooperate with us on a missile defense system? Why don't you participate with the United States? Please send your generals over to see how such a system would work. Send your scientists. Let us have the ability to discuss this issue in an open forum

where we'll be completely transparent. And I'll remind him that we're having these discussions not only bilaterally with the Czech Republic and Poland but also through the context of NATO, that the missile defense system will be coordinated with NATO.

And so I just want the people of this important country to understand that our intention is—and the reality is, is that we'll protect ourselves from the true threat. It seems like to me, it's in this country's interest to work cooperatively with the latest technologies to provide protection not only for themselves but for others. It's a noble gesture and an important gesture. And I'll tell Russia that they need not fear such a system, that Russia is—with whom we'd like to have positive relations. That's a complex relationship, no doubt. But there's a lot of areas where we can work together to deal with common threats. And that will be my message, Mr. President, to President Putin, not only in Germany but when he comes to visit me in the United States.

We had a really important and interesting discussion. We discussed a lot of important issues. That's what you should expect friends to do. I'm convinced that this relationship is really good for the United States of America and will continue to work to foster good relations.

Mr. President and Mr. Prime Minister, thank you for your hospitality. I thank you for your important discussions, and thanks for giving me a chance to discuss these issues with the media.

Prime Minister Topolánek. Mr. honored President, I'm very happy that this meeting has taken place, and I will repeat what Mr. President Klaus said—I'm very happy that this meeting took place in this format. It appears that after a long time, the foreign policy of the Czech Republic goes in the same direction; it is coordinated; we are pulling in one direction. That's good news not only for the U.S.; that's good news primarily for the people in this country.

This visit has confirmed that there are no major problems—no problems, I should say, between our two countries. On the contrary, the U.S. and the Czech Republic share the same values. Although each of those countries has a different size and, as a result, car-

ries a different portion of responsibility, we need to say that is the same kind of responsibility. That's why we coparticipate in peace missions; we are involved in combating terrorism; we want to be involved in collective defense by building the missile defense system in the Czech Republic and in Poland.

I would like to emphasize that the cooperation with the U.S. does not concern only security issues, human rights issues, et cetera, and peacekeeping missions, et cetera. This is what the media has been paying most attention to. The U.S. is not only our major ally, but it is one of the major investors in the Czech Republic. Apart from that, we are after business cooperation, technology cooperation. The U.S. is the world's innovation leader. It is dominant in science. And maybe this is our condition—and I may be of putting this in a light at all—this may be our condition for the installation of the radar facility in the Czech Republic. We want cooperation in science technology and innovation. This is what we regard as very important, not only for the missile defense itself but for the Czech Republic and the U.S., as such.

I want to say that the point is not only to site the facility in the Czech Republic, but this is about the joint will for defense of freedom. And I think the Czechs are much more sensitive to that than many other European nations. That's why we want to be involved. And we want to shift the collective defense not only to the Czech Republic but also to make sure it stretches over other friends in Europe.

In response to media speculation, I would like to say that neither me nor the American President link the siting of the radar facility to the visa waiver issue. Visa is unjust; it must be done away with. We've started discussing this much earlier than we started the radar facility talks. I trust President Bush and his clear promise that he will advocate the waiver of the visa, and talking about a bargain is, I think, rather undignified in this regard. We would be involved in visa talks even without the radar. And on the contrary, we would want to help our allies, protect our allies against a rogue state's rockets, even if there was no visa problem. These topics are inter-related only because we are the Czech Republic and they are the U.S.; otherwise, not.

We didn't discuss these issues only; we talked about human rights in Cuba, in Belarus, and our support of the opposition there. We talked about Southern Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Transdnestria conflicts. We talked about Kosovo, about our missions to Afghanistan. We talked about energy security. All those are interrelated issues. We talked also about a number of other issues. We need to talk about such issues, and I'm happy that in a crushing majority of issues, rather in all issues, we could find agreement with the American President.

There are a lot of things that we could not discuss, and I hope we will be able to discuss them during my visit to the U.S. that is now being prepared.

If I were to pick two words from George Walker Bush today that characterize our cooperation and friendship, I would call it active partnership. Thank you.

President Klaus. Thank you, honored President. Thank you, Prime Minister. And let me bring this conference closed. Thank you, and have a good day.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 11:50 a.m. in Rothmayer Hall at Prague Castle. In his remarks, he referred to President Vladimir Putin of Russia. President Klaus and Prime Minister Topolanek spoke in Czech, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks to the Democracy and Security Conference in Prague

June 5, 2007

Thank you all. President Ilves, Foreign Minister Schwarzenberg, distinguished guests: Laura and I are pleased to be back in Prague, and we appreciate the gracious welcome in this historic hall. Tomorrow I'll attend the G-8 summit, where I will meet with the leaders of the world's most powerful economies. This afternoon I stand with men and women who represent an even greater power: the power of human conscience.

In this room are dissidents and democratic activists from 17 countries on five continents. You follow different traditions; you practice different faiths; and you face different chal-

lenges. But you are united by an unwavering conviction: That freedom is the non-negotiable right of every man, woman, and child, and that the path to lasting peace in our world is liberty.

This conference was conceived by three of the great advocates for freedom in our time: Jose Maria Aznar, Vaclav Havel, and Natan Sharansky. I thank them for the invitation to address this inspiring assembly and for showing the world that an individual with moral clarity and courage can change the course of history.

It is fitting that we meet in the Czech Republic, a nation at the heart of Europe and of the struggle for freedom on this continent. Nine decades ago, Tomas Masaryk proclaimed Czechoslovakia's independence based on the "ideals of modern democracy." That democracy was interrupted, first by the Nazis and then by the Communists, who seized power in a shameful coup that left the Foreign Minister dead in the courtyard of this palace.

Through the long darkness of the Soviet occupation, the true face of this nation was never in doubt. The world saw it in the reforms of the Prague Spring and the principled demands of Charter 77. Those efforts were met with tanks and truncheons and arrests by secret police. But the violent would not have the final word. In 1989, thousands gathered in Wenceslas Square to call for their freedom. Theaters like Magic Lantern became headquarters for dissidents. Workers left their factories to support a strike. And within weeks, the regime crumbled. Vaclav Havel went from prisoner of state to head of state. And the people of Czechoslovakia brought down the Iron Curtain with a Velvet Revolution.

Across Europe, similar scenes were unfolding. In Poland, a movement that began in a single shipyard freed people across a nation. In Hungary, mourners gathered at Heroes Square to bury a slain reformer and bury their Communist regime as well. In East Germany, families came together for prayer meetings and found the strength to tear down a wall. Soon, activists emerged from the attics and church basements to reclaim the streets of Bulgaria and Romania and Albania and Latvia and Lithuania and Estonia.